



COPD Flare-Up Action Plan



This Action Plan is based on the guideline: *Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD): Diagnosis and Management* at www.BCGuidelines.ca

FLARE-UP ACTION PLAN FOR: _____ Date: _____

Doctor's name: _____ Doctor's phone #: _____

Green Zone: My COPD is well controlled

- ▶ My breathing problems have not changed (shortness of breath, cough, and sputum).
- ▶ My appetite is normal.
- ▶ I am able to exercise and do my daily activities as normal.
- ▶ I have no trouble sleeping.

What should I do?

Continue to take my medications as prescribed:

Medication	Dose	Puffs/Pills	Frequency

Watch for a COPD flare-up when:

- ▶ I get a cold or flu.
- ▶ I feel run down or tired.
- ▶ I am exposed to smoke or air pollution.
- ▶ After weather changes.
- ▶ When my mood changes, such as feeling stressed or anxious.

Yellow Zone: My symptoms are worse | Take action - FLARE-UP

If you experience one or more of these symptoms, this may be the start of a COPD flare-up.

- ▶ I am more short of breath than usual.
- ▶ I am coughing or wheezing more than usual.
- ▶ I have more sputum or mucus than usual.
- ▶ I have green, yellow or rust coloured sputum.

What should I do? - Your doctor will check all that apply:

Take **additional** treatment prescribed by my doctor depending on my symptoms:

I increase my reliever (**BRONCHODILATOR**) if I am **MORE SHORT OF BREATH** than usual.

Bronchodilator	Dose	# of Puffs	Frequency

Plan your day, get rest, relax, use breathing techniques, huff and cough to clear phlegm as required.

Other: _____

I start **PREDNISONE** if after increasing my bronchodilator my **SHORTNESS OF BREATH DOES NOT IMPROVE** and my symptoms have been worse **FOR AT LEAST ___ HOURS.**

Prednisone	Dose	# of Pills	Frequency

I start my **ANTIBIOTICS** if my **SPUTUM** becomes green, yellow or rust coloured or has blood in it and my symptoms have been worse **FOR AT LEAST ___ HOURS.**

Antibiotic	Dose	# of Pills	Frequency

If after taking the above action, your symptoms don't improve within 48 hours, SEEK MEDICAL CARE IMMEDIATELY!

Red Zone: DANGER | Take action - get help!

- ▶ I am **extremely** short of breath.
- ▶ I am confused, agitated, or drowsy.
- ▶ I have sudden chest pain.

What should I do? Call **9-1-1** for an ambulance to take you to the emergency room.

WHY SHOULD I HAVE A FLARE-UP ACTION PLAN?

This action plan will tell you what to do when you have a COPD flare-up. This will help you and your doctor quickly recognize and treat flare-ups so you can return to a stable state as soon as possible.

- ▶ For more general information on managing your COPD and getting support, please see the [Resource Guide for Patients](http://www.BCGuidelines.ca), available at www.BCGuidelines.ca.

HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I'M HAVING A FLARE-UP?

A flare-up may happen when you get a cold or flu, get run down or tired, or are exposed to air pollution or weather changes. There are three main symptoms that define a flare-up:

- ▶ You are much more short of breath than normal.
- ▶ You are coughing more and/or you have more sputum than normal.
- ▶ Your sputum changes from its normal colour to yellow, green, or rust colour.

If you have one or more of these symptoms, this may be the start of a COPD flare-up.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I HAVE A COPD FLARE-UP?

1. Start your action plan as instructed by your doctor. **Make sure you understand when to start additional treatment and when to seek urgent medical attention.**
2. Your doctor will explain the specific circumstances (e.g. your symptoms are worse for at least 48 hours) before you should start prednisone or antibiotics. These circumstances may vary between patients.
3. If you do not feel better after 48 hours of taking action, or if you are getting worse at any time, get medical attention right away.
4. Book an appointment to see your doctor to make sure you are on the correct treatment pathway and your symptoms are improving. You may need to get refills of your flare-up medications.

THIS ACTION PLAN IS FOR COPD FLARE-UPS ONLY

There are other reasons your symptoms may worsen such as heart problems, pneumonia, or blood clots in the lungs. **It is important to watch out for other problems such as:**

- ▶ Abnormal shortness of breath
- ▶ Abnormal chest pain
- ▶ Coughing up blood
- ▶ Unusual swelling in legs, ankles, or feet
- ▶ Abdominal bloating
- ▶ Extreme fatigue or drowsiness
- ▶ Persistent morning headaches
- ▶ Confusion or decreased level of consciousness
- ▶ Heart palpitations, being light-headed or dizzy, or fainting

If you experience any of the above symptoms, **see your doctor right away or go to the emergency room.**

MY COPD FLARE-UP RECORD

After a COPD flare-up, it is important to keep track of which medications you took. For example, if you took an antibiotic, a different antibiotic may need to be prescribed for your next flare-up. Keep track of the date of your flare-ups, whether you took prednisone, what antibiotic (if any) you took, and if you had to go to the hospital.

Bring this information with you to your doctor appointments.

Date of Flare-Up:					
Did you take prednisone?					
Did you take antibiotics? If so, which one?					
Did you have to go to the hospital?					

For HealthLinkBC, dial **8-1-1**. You can talk to a nurse 24/7, and to a pharmacist from 5PM-9AM daily.

www.HealthLinkBC.ca